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IFFTI 2017: The future of fashion is you

on March 31, 2017 in [events](http://amfi.nl/category/events/), [people](http://amfi.nl/category/people/), [projects](http://amfi.nl/category/projects/)

AMFI is the 2017 host of IFFTI, the annual conference of leading fashion schools worldwide. The theme of this year is ‘Breaking the rules’ and AMFI students are reporting on events. Fashion Theory students Loïs van der Wildt and Sanne Nooitgedagt got mesmerized by the enthusiasm of textile expert and lecturer Sarah E. Braddock Clarke.

Being amidst the hundreds of fashion insiders from all over the world during the IFFTI conference, we had the privilege to meet up with Sarah E. Braddock Clarke: a curator, consultant, writer and foremost a lecturer at the Falmouth University in Cornwall. She is trained in Textile Design and did a Master in Fine Art, specialising in fibres. With a gripping sense of enthusiasm deeply rooted in the origins of textiles, Sarah enjoys bringing across this passion to her students, simultaneously counting on the younger generation in fashion to ‘break the rules’ and move towards a more sustainable fashion industry.

Image of me in the gardens of the Hermitage and caption underneath:

“It is important to know the process behind the garment”

Could you tell us a little bit about your interest within fashion?

“I have a profound love for cultures; I basically travelled every place around the world, Japan being my personal favourite. At the moment I’m working closely with a woman in Japan who has an amazing textile collection; she wants me to evaluate with a Western eye and combine that with her Eastern eye. She has introduced me to the wonders of Byzantine textiles, which takes me back to my original training on silk trade routes and all those lectures I had in school, which I should have listened more carefully to. I’m always researching and in a certain way I’ll always be taking on the role of a student – I’m continuously curious and that’s also why I have a passion for teaching. It is usually an exchange of ideas; it keeps you young.”

Have you experienced a change in the fashion industry since you’ve entered the field?

“I think the amalgamation of the globalisation has skewed the industry in an immeasurable way: everything has kind of become one, which I think is a shame. What the West is doing, isn’t necessarily right. I’ve learned an awful lot from the Japanese culture, although you can learn from other European cultures as well. At Falmouth University, we’re interested in the classic, the timeless, wearing something for many years – not buying something cheap to then throw it away. I’ve got one clothing item that I’ve had since I was 18 and it still fits. I think that it doesn’t matter if a garment has a little tear in it or a mend, because it is evidence that it’s had a good time.”

“I am not interested in buying something cheap to then throw away”

That idea is clearly not in line with the fast fashion industry we’re in nowadays.

“No, exactly. I’m very much against that. And I think it’s really important for young people to know the process behind the garment. Not just where the piece of clothing comes from, but also where the fabric was made and where it was dyed and finished, the whole process.”

Most fashion students will recognize at least one of the publications (co)written by Sarah E. Braddock Clarke.

In what way do you teach your students to value these aspects of clothing more?

“When I write books, I ask designers or companies to send me a small sample of a fabric, because I need to look at the material and have it in my hands. By now I have an amazing collection of materials, which I show in my class so that the students also get a sense. I love doing this, because it means I can be quiet whilst they get amazed by these fabrics and formulate their own opinion. Tangibility is a great way of remembering – if you handle something, you remember it.”

The theme of this year’s IFFTI conference is ‘breaking the rules’ – in relation to that, what main rules in the current fashion system do you think should be broken?

“I think money isn’t everything. Too many companies focus too much on profit, but it’s easy for me to say because I’m not really in that world. However, if we’re being idealistic -which I think we should be - it is not about making everything as cheap as possible. More people, especially the young, talk about ecology and sustainability and I always say: ‘keep those ideals, don’t lose that when you leave school, don’t get sucked into this world of making profit.’ It is not all about money, you have to think of the long-term benefits.”

Image of curators outside AMFI. Caption reads:

The group of international curators that meet up this week during IFFTI to research the possiblities of collaborating. Sarah is standing on third on the left, wearing a black beret.